

**CALFED OPERATIONS COORDINATION GROUP
SEPTEMBER 24, 1998 MEETING NOTES AND ACTION ITEMS**

Review of August 27 meeting notes

No revisions were made to the August 27, CALFED Ops meeting notes.

Announcements

The October and December CALFED Operations meetings have been rescheduled to Wednesday October 14 and Wednesday December 9 respectively.

Beginning with the October meeting, Steve Kashiwada will be replacing Bob Potter as CALFED Operations Group Co-Chair representing DWR. Mr. Kashiwada is the DWR Deputy Director in charge of the Department's Division of Engineering and Division of Operations and Maintenance. He also represents the Department on the Independent System Operators Board of Directors.

The following handouts were provided at the meeting:

1. SWP Operations Package, DWR, J. Spence
2. September Official Forecast – WY-99, USBR, P. Fujitani
3. News Release – Draft SJRA EIS/EIR, USBR, L. Ploss
3. Survival indices for late fall yearling releases, USFWS, M. Kjelson
4. Steelhead/Spring-Run Chinook Consultation Update, DWR, Z. Hymanson
5. Delta Smelt Midwater Trawl Survey, DFG, P. Herrgesell

SWRCB

The Bay-Delta water right hearing is currently in Phase 5 dealing with southern Delta salinity and dissolved oxygen. Phase 2A, dealing with the San Joaquin River Agreement, will follow. The Board will announce seven additional hearing days in November and an additional nine hearing days in December.

The Board will adopt an extension to Order WR 95-6 in mid-December.

Operations

CVP/SWP Operations Status: The Net Delta Outflow Index is 18,000 cfs. The Sacramento River flow and the San Joaquin River flow are running at 23,000 and 5,000 cfs respectively. The SWP is exporting approximately 4,300 cfs. The estimated location of X2 is 64.5 km, just upstream of Port Chicago. The State projects its share of San Luis Reservoir to fill by mid-November.

The Delta Cross Channel Gates are closed.

The USBR plans to fill its share of San Luis Reservoir by the end of December. Tracy Pumping Plant is currently exporting 4,200 cfs. Keswick is releasing 9,500 cfs and will be ramping down to 5,500 cfs by mid-October. USBR is having a difficult time maintaining temperature control at Bend Bridge and is petitioning NMFS to move the compliance location to Jelly's Ferry. Nimbus releases are 4,500 cfs and will be ramped down to 2,500 by mid-October. The Bureau has scheduled a tentative outage for the Delta Mendota Canal from November 15 through January 15 for routine maintenance along the canal and at the Tracy Fish Collection Facility.

The TFCF has been handling an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 adult-sized (3+ inch carapace) mitten crabs a day since early September. The large number of crabs has created numerous problems at the facility. At times, mitten crabs and debris have caused up to a 4-foot head differential at the trash rack. Crabs are difficult to remove from the holding tanks and increase the time needed to load the truck. An estimated 98% of fish do not survive transport once they are in the truck, effectively rendering salvage efforts useless. The TFCF was temporarily allowed to dump all salvage fish and crabs in a pit.

ACTION ITEM: At the October meeting there will be a presentation on the mitten crab life cycle and distribution; an account of current fish salvage operational difficulties; and a report on an interagency meeting focusing on mitten crab biological informational needs and methods of control at the facilities.

Forecasted 1999 Operations: DWR operations staff is working on the 1999 operations forecast in terms of 90% and 50% hydrology exceedences. All AFRP Actions are being met in the analysis. DWR will present the results of the study at next month's meeting.

Delta Action 8: There have been six experiments since December 1993 to evaluate the potential of using export reductions to increase the survival of chinook salmon smolts emigrating through the Delta in the winter. Four of the

tests have been conducted under high export conditions. To satisfy the need for low export data points and because of current year water supply conditions, low export conditions will be scheduled for both the December and January fish releases this winter. The goal is to hold combined exports of the CVP and SWP to 2,000 cfs for both two-week experiments in early December and early January.

Delta Operations Criteria: Water quality is good and excess conditions exist in the Delta.

Phase one of the Suisun Marsh Salinity Control Gate flashboard modification experiment will begin October 1 and the last phase will be completed November 10 according to the following plan:

- Phase One: Standard flashboards will be installed and the gates will be operated.
- Phase Two: The flashboards will be removed and the gates will be fixed in the up position.
- Phase Three: The modified flashboards will be installed and the gates will be operated.

VAMP/San Joaquin River Hydrology: The draft EIS/EIR for the proposed flow objectives for the San Joaquin River Agreement was released September 23 for public review and comment. During the 45-day public review period, two public hearings will be held. They will take place in Sacramento on October 23 and Modesto on October 29.

Flow at Vernalis on the San Joaquin River is just over 5,000. The forecast is 5,200 cfs in October and 3,100 cfs in November.

The Stanislaus River has been flowing above 1,750 cfs since mid-June and is projected to continue at that rate until mid-November.

Temporary Barriers: Installation is unlikely this year.

Action Item: For next CALFED Ops, DWR and USBR will report on proposed south Delta low water level improvements including:

- **Monitoring to determine channel capacities**
- **Triggers for operations adjustments**
- **Implementation of long term improvements**

Spring-Run Protection Plan: Discussions have taken place among members of the Data Assessment Team over the past month on monitoring, indicators, and actions for the SRPP. The SRPP will be updated and made available to the Operations Group by mid-October. A final version will be transmitted to the FGC by its November 6 meeting.

Fisheries Status

Spring-Run/Steelhead Biological Opinion Process: DWR and USBR are preparing to enter into formal consultation on Central Valley steelhead trout, listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act, and spring-run chinook salmon, listed as threatened under the California ESA and proposed for listing under the federal ESA. These consultations will result in one-year biological opinions from DFG and NMFS covering operations of existing SWP and CVP facilities. DWR and USBR are preparing a biological assessment for both species while conferring with DFG and NMFS to ensure compatibility of the biological opinions in case the species status changes, (e.g., spring-run become listed under federal ESA). The current timeline is as follows:

October 15 – draft biological assessment is submitted to NMFS and DFG
November 15 – final biological assessment is submitted to NMFS and DFG
November 16 – formal consultation begins
February 15 – biological opinions are submitted to DWR and USBR

Spring-Run Chinook Salmon: The final escapement estimate for Butte Creek spring-run adults is 20,200 which is much greater than historical estimates. Surveys continue on Deer and Mill Creeks with no new estimates reported.

Winter-Run Chinook Salmon: This is a good spawning year for winter-run with many juvenile in the upper Sacramento being trapped at monitoring sites at Knights Landing, Redd Bluff, and Balls Ferry. The final DFG winter-run escapement estimate for this year is approximately 2,600 adults at Red Bluff Diversion Dam. The carcass survey will produce an even higher estimate. The grilse (or jack) rate is 30 percent this year.

The first winter-run of the season was observed in the Delta unusually early this season at Clarksburg on September 22.

Steelhead: The rule proposed under section 4(d) of ESA that will prohibit take of steelhead is under development at NMFS headquarters and a final decision is expected to be issued by the end of the year.

October 8, 1998

Splittail: USFWS field staff has completed its review of comments on splittail listing and will be sending its recommendation to the regional director of USFWS the last week of September.

Mike Thabault has taken a new position in the Sacramento office of USFWS. Ken Sanchez is his replacement as chief of the Coast Bay-Delta branch.

Delta Smelt: DFG handed out a report on the Delta Smelt Midwater Trawl Survey for September. So far this month, a total of 184 delta smelt have been collected and the abundance index is 238.

UPDATE: No delta smelt were collected at the fish facilities in the month of September.

No Name Group

The NNG presented its draft summary report on Stage 1 early implementation measures at the CALFED Policy Group Meeting on September 14 and is in the process of receiving comments. The NNG continues to work with the Diversions Effects on Fisheries Team (DEFT) on operational criteria including new E/I ratios needed in conjunction with water supply measures for protection of fisheries.

Next Meeting . . . October 14